

# **PROPOSAL TO ARIZONA FOREST HEALTH COUNCIL: VISION FOR A NEW COMMUNITY FORESTRY SUB-COMMITTEE**

## **ISSUE OVERVIEW**

Arizona State Forestry Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program was initiated in the mid-1980s to provide technical assistance to communities throughout the state. The intent was to assist communities in improving and managing their urban forest resources. The Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 (as Amended through 2008), known as the Farm Bill, noted that urban and community forests were in decline, and established a national UCF program. Arizona State Forestry first received federal funding to implement UCF cost-share assistance programs in 1991.

Over the last few years, State Forestry has seen changes in program direction and implementation as a result of the 2008 Farm Bill. The Farm Bill formalized a shift in direction for USDA Forest Service (FS) State and Private Forestry programs (including UCF) that Arizona delivers in partnership with the FS. Every state was directed to prepare a State Assessment of Forest Resources and Statewide Forest Resource Strategy, collectively referred to as the state Forest Action Plan. The documents emphasize combining local, state and federal program resources to address forestry concerns in identified Priority Landscape Areas. The Arizona Forest Action Plan (completed in June 2010) helps landowners and managers better recognize and support opportunities where working together and leveraging limited resources can address multiple critical issues of statewide significance. One critical objective of the Forest Action Plan is to serve as a catalyst for more strategic, comprehensive and coordinated approaches to forest management in Arizona.

## **CURRENT UCF ADVISORY COUNCIL STRUCTURE IN ARIZONA**

Historically, Arizona State Forestry's UCF program has operated independently, with specific program staff hired to oversee and manage the program and cost-share assistance grants provided to Arizona communities and community groups. The advisory council is in transition between focusing on what the original program direction mandated and their new organizational direction as recently outlined by the council.

### **ARIZONA COMMUNITY TREE COUNCIL (ACTC)**

Starting as "Arizona ReLeaf" in 1989, ACTC initially focused on planting trees in urban and rural areas of Arizona. Arizona ReLeaf became "Arizona Forestry Council" in January 1991 in response to the federal requirement that each State have a Forestry Council in order to receive federal resources for urban and community forestry programs. The organization changed its name to "Arizona Community Tree Council, Inc." in 1996 to better reflect the goals and mission of the Council.

Historically, this group has provided volunteer management for members throughout the state, and offered education and outreach opportunities to urban foresters and arborists. The organization has also raised funds for areas impacted by wildfires, conducted tree plantings across the state, and partnered with Arizona State Forestry and others on a number of urban forestry initiatives. Over the years, the educational role of ACTC has increased while the advisory role to State Forestry's UCF program implementation has diminished.

In the summer of 2012, the ACTC Board voted to move forward as an independent non-profit organization – separate from Arizona State Forestry – with no advisory or program development role to the State's UCF Program. Although this separation is intended to allow ACTC to develop and achieve its self-defined goals, it will remain an integral partner to the State's UCF Program.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

An internal State Forestry group consisting of representatives from State Forestry's UCF program and ACTC was assembled to provide recommendations for how State Forestry can better address the Forest Action Plan priorities while continuing to meet national program requirements. After careful consideration, it is recommended that a Community Forestry Sub-committee to the Arizona Forest Health Council be developed.

### COMMUNITY FORESTRY SUB-COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

Arizona State Forestry recognizes the importance of being strategic about the number of sub-committee members that can function efficiently and effectively. The following representation from the existing advisory council is recommended with the understanding that additional interest groups may be represented through appointment to the Forest Advisory Council, and may not necessarily serve on the Community Forestry Sub-committee.

It is recommended that the Sub-committee be comprised of 9-11 people from any of the following groups (maximum number per category):

- State government (1)
- State forestry agency (1) – logically, this will be the UCF Program Manager/Co-Lead
- County government (1)
- City/Town government (1)
- Tribal government (2)
- Non-profit forestry and conservation citizen organization (2)
- Forest products/nursery and related industries (1)
- Urban forestry landscape and design industries (1)
- Academic institutions with UCF expertise (2)
- Professional utility natural resource or arboriculture society (1)

- Citizen from community <50K (non-govt) (1)
- Citizen from community >50K (non-govt) (1)

#### COMMUNITY FORESTRY SUB-COMMITTEE OPERATING PROTOCOL

Council Leadership. A "Co-Lead" concept is recommended, consisting of a State Forestry staff member and a Council member. The Council member serves as Chairperson and leads meetings; the State Forestry staffer coordinates agendas, meeting arrangements, etc.

Task Working Groups. Working groups may be appointed as needed, but will not be "standing."

Sub-Committee Members. State Forestry staff (Program Managers, etc.) will participate in meetings but will not serve as voting members of the sub-committee.

Sub-Committee Charter. A simple charter outlining the Sub-committee purpose and operating procedures will be developed by the Community Forestry Sub-committee membership.

Nominations. State Forestry will follow the current nomination process used for advisory councils to appoint members from identified interests. The current nomination process involves a direct invitation from the "executive board", which in this case will be the sub-committee representation.

Evaluation. 6-12 months after formation, State Forestry will review the effectiveness of the Community Forestry Sub-committee to assure program needs are being addressed.

#### SUB-COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Facilitate sound land management across all land ownerships through enhanced interaction between communities, private landowners, and local, state and federal agencies and related interest groups. Clarify roles of partners and collaborative groups.
- Assist the State Forester in reviewing policy issues related to urban and community forestry. Develop position papers in collaboration with relevant constituencies and interest groups.
- Identify and coordinate funding opportunities to strategically address Forest Action Plan objectives (as they pertain to urban and community forestry). Coordinate competitive grants to National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council and other non-state and private funding opportunities.
- Advise the State Forester on use of non-grant program funds. Provide oversight for the Arizona Urban and Community Forestry Program.